



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER  
POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY OF MERCY**

*Thursday, 20 August 1998*

Dear Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy,

1. I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of the General Chapter you have just concluded in Savona, the city in which St Mary Joseph Rossello founded your congregation over a century ago. I extend my cordial greeting to each of you who have attended the Chapter, and at the same time to all the other sisters — over a thousand — in the various communities scattered throughout Europe, Africa, America and Asia.

I extend my best wishes to the Superior General, Sr M. Celsa Giuseppa Benetti, who was confirmed in that office by the Chapter. To her I extend my congratulations and my encouragement to continue with a calm and joyful heart in her service to the congregation, in order to further its effective apostolic presence in the Church.

2. Your Chapter took place in the year of the Holy Spirit, the second stage in the journey of immediate preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. For this reason I would first of all like to recall *the “intimate relation” that links the consecrated life to the working of the Holy Spirit* (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation [\*Vita consecrata\*](#), n. 19).

In the first place, the Spirit is the soul of any vocation: it is he who “enables new men and women to recognize the appeal of such a demanding choice ... it is he who guides the growth of this desire ... it is he who shapes and moulds the hearts of those who are called, configuring them to Christ, the chaste, poor and obedient One” ([\*ibid.\*](#)).

Just like Mary’s “yes” and her virginal fruitfulness, so the gift of self in the consecrated life takes place in the “shadow” of the power of the Most High. And this “yes”, this gift, is renewed each day in prayerful union with God — of which the Eucharist is the summit — in fraternal communion and in the apostolate.

Down the centuries and millenniums, the Holy Spirit sows a variety of charisms in the Church, including those proper to

the various institutes. "Hence many different forms of the consecrated life have arisen, whereby the Church is 'adorned' ... and is enriched ... for carrying out her mission in the world" (*ibid.*).

3. Through the shining witness of Mary Joseph Rossello, the Spirit was able to bring forth a new shoot in the fertile land of Liguria, starting from that inexhaustible source of evangelical life which is *the experience of divine mercy*, "the fundamental content of the messianic message of Christ and the constitutive power of his mission" (*Dives in misericordia*, n. 6). This is your charism, which makes you feel particularly close to Mary most holy, Mother of Mercy and of all who put their trust in her.

The General Chapter is above all an *act of fidelity to the founding charism* and the subsequent spiritual heritage of the institute. "It is precisely in this fidelity to the inspiration of the founders and foundresses, an inspiration which is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit, that the essential elements of the consecrated life can be more readily discerned and more fervently put into practice" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 36). In the Chapter meetings you listen to what the Spirit wishes to say, to discern what it means to be faithful to your own charism in your institute today, in the Church and in the world, so that the seed of holiness may bear fruit in the present time.

In this regard, "all must be fully convinced that the quest for ever greater conformity to the Lord is the guarantee of any renewal which seeks to remain faithful to an institute's original inspiration" (*ibid.*, n. 37).

4. Even contemporary mankind — with its perennial poverty and with that poverty particular to our age — thirsts for divine mercy and seeks to discern its presence in men and women who are its credible witnesses.

This witness must be based on the very life of the religious *community*, where each day mercy becomes mutual concern, sharing and fraternal correction. The various "*ministries of mercy*" — as your Constitutions call them — radiate from an intense personal and community experience, expressed in your distinctive way of "working for the extension of the kingdom of God" (Const. 1).

Dear Sisters, you place all this under the special protection of Mary Mother of Mercy. May she, the "sublime example of perfect consecration" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 28), always remind each of her daughters of "the primacy of God's initiative" and communicate to them "the love which enables them to offer their lives every day for Christ and to co-operate with him in the salvation of the world" (*ibid.*). May the Blessed Virgin, also through your witness of faith and love, be acknowledged by all as Mother of Mercy.

With this wish I sincerely impart to you and to the entire congregation a special Apostolic Blessing